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Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Case Study: Kegonsa Elementary

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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Introduction/Background

HISTORY

Kegonsa is a small school in the district of Stoughton, a suburb of Madison, with a student body that consists of 75% white, 10% black, 7% hispanic, 6% two or more races and 3% Asian. 9% are students with disabilities, 3% are English Language Learners, and 35.6% are economically disadvantaged.

In the fall of 2016, in response to a significant behavioral and social emotional need and falling academic proficiency, Kegonsa Elementary staff expanded their social emotional learning supports and began training and implementation of Zones of Regulation, Social Thinking, Mindfulness, Responsive Classroom and Trauma Sensitive Practices. In addition, PBIS and Second Step Curriculum were previously partially in place, but were expanded and realigned with current practices.

THE MODEL

At the core of Kegonsa's understanding of Social Emotional Learning is the building of relationships between staff and students and among students which fosters not only high levels of learning achievement but also strong personal and social interactions between the members of our Kegonsa family on all levels. Our SEL work is anchored in the work of our building leadership team and is one of our four strategic priorities. The leadership team, in consultation with the stakeholders they represent, determine the scope and sequence of our work using the DPI SEL competencies as a guide.

At Kegonsa we strongly believe that SEL is not an isolated lesson or two, but rather learning and instruction that is woven through the entire day and the entire school year and is implemented across all school environments. To do SEL work well, we believe that there must be explicit and systematic teaching of SEL competencies and then, most importantly, students must be given myriad opportunities throughout their entire time at Kegonsa to work towards mastery.

THE PLAYERS

Kegonsa's staff is deeply committed to the social emotional learning of our students. We believe that to facilitate our students reaching this goal, SEL implementation must be a priority for our *entire* Kegonsa family, not only for our classroom teachers, but also for our specialist teachers, our learning strategists, our educational assistants, our student services team, our instructional coaches, our school based leadership team, our PBIS leadership team, our Responsive Classroom team, our principal, our Dean of Students, our transportation staff, our front office staff, our custodial and lunchroom staff and most importantly students and their families.

Here are a few illustrations of this team approach to shared responsibility for SEL works:

- Our custodian does book talks (using targeted books) with students needing extra support and a positive male role model.

- Student Council plans school engagement activities and celebrations.
- We hold mixed grade level community meetings (for example, 1st and 4th grade) every two weeks.
 - We facilitate opportunities to *build relationships* and *engage in teamwork* activities.
 - We publicly recognize students for engaging in leadership roles and who may be demonstrating growth in SEL competencies (time management, self-efficacy).
- The bus drivers take on the role of modeling respect and responsibility on the bus as well as acknowledging positive peer models who ensure safe passage to and from school.
- Our Educational Assistants and specialists staff are on duty outside of our school both before and after school making positive contact with students and families.
- Our Physical Education staff organizes games at recess to offer students a more structured activity while teaching sportsmanship and games students can play at home or during other free time.
 - Other teachers are active participants in games with students rather than being passive observers.
 - Emphasis is placed on treating each other fairly and on working cooperatively with teammates.
- Our MAPEL staff (Music, Art, Physical Education, Library) implemented a version of the “[2x10](#)” strategy where each teacher takes individual students and spends 10 minutes a week building relationships and goal setting.
- Kegonsa implemented [Watch Dogs](#) which is a specific program focused on engaging fathers and father figures in our school setting. Watch Dogs provide a positive male role model and an extra set of eyes throughout the school.
- Volunteer 4th grade students serve as peer models for students with significant disabilities daily during lunch.
- Stoughton Area High School students mentor K-5 students throughout the school on a daily basis.

Big Ideas

STUDENT INSTRUCTION

- **Universal**
 - *Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports* (PBIS) is implemented consistently and with fidelity across all settings.
 - *Zones of Regulation* language is used in all settings.
 - Our school counselor implemented a semester long Zones curriculum in the fall of 2016 and now conducts booster trainings each school year for all grade levels.
 - All educators and support staff now use Zones language.
 - *Second Step* lessons are taught by our counselor biweekly in each classroom for 30 minutes.
 - Two staff members (Counselor and Teacher) trained in *Yoga and Mindfulness*. Mindfulness lessons are offered to classroom on an as needed basis.
 - *Social Thinking* has been implemented school-wide.
 - During the 17-18 school year, sessions were delivered to all classrooms by our school psychologist and speech and language pathologist.
 - In the 18-19 school year the Speech and Language Pathologist is working with 15 educators for more advanced social thinking training on a monthly basis.
 - *Bullying lessons* are delivered biweekly in select classrooms for 30 minutes by the school counselor.
 - *Responsive Classrooms* training was provided for all staff. Teachers now lead morning meetings and closing circles daily in each classroom.
- **Secondary/Tertiary**
 - *Small group and individual* instruction is delivered in formats such as:
 - Lunch bunches that meet at least once per week where students identified by data and teacher referral meet with an adult and peers to build skills.

- Targeted attendance groups for students struggling with coming to school
- One-on-one instruction for specific skills daily through modeling and reteaching.
- *Large group* booster instruction as needed (as determined by data and/or classroom teacher).

ADULT TRAINING

- **All Staff**
 - Compassionate Trauma Sensitive Schools Professional Development
 - Equity Professional Development
 - Introduction to Collaborative Problem Solving and Proactive Solutions (Ross Greene)
 - PBIS Professional Development
 - Proactive Behavior Practices
 - Systematic instruction for tracking and proactively responding to student behaviors
 - Responsive Classroom
 - Interactive Modeling
 - Logical Consequences
 - Morning Meeting/Closing Circle
 - Recharge (“Take A Break”)
 - Social Thinking
- **Subsets of Staff**
 - Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education
 - Facilitated Book Studies for deeper learning such as:
 - Collaborative Problem Solving by Ross Greene
 - Teasing, Tattling, Defiance and More by Margaret Wilson
 - The Power of Our Words by Paula Denton
 - PBIS Tier 1 & 2 Training
 - Responsive Classroom Advanced Training
 - Social Thinking

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a critical factor in our approach to implementing the SEL competencies, and for that reason significant emphasis has been placed on shared responsibility across our entire staff. Our District strategic plan supports this work. A recent mental health grant from DPI provides ongoing compassionate schools district and school training. Our school-based leadership team is key to our ongoing strategic visioning and action planning as it relates to SEL implementation. But most importantly, each and every staff member that works with our students is deeply invested in the social emotional learning of our students. Our strong, unwavering belief that SEL is critical to advancing not only students’ educational growth but also their growth as people and members of our community is what we believe is the strongest driver for sustainability.

EQUITY

What have the outcomes been?

- Attendance has greatly improved.
 - Baseline - 16-17: 79 10 Parent Excused Absences
 - As of 11/30/18 there have been **zero** 10 day attendance meetings.
 - No students have been identified so far this year as needing tier 2 attendance groups.
- Behavior referrals have decreased 70% over the last two years.
- Suspensions have been reduced by 14%, and will likely drop in half by the end of this school year.

How are things different for kids?

Overall, there is a significantly more respectful and safe school climate. Students are *in class*, and *engaged* in learning.

Students are able to:

- Attend to instruction for larger periods of time (increased engagement).
- Express emotions in a respectful way.
- Manage emotions with less support from adults (students identify and use appropriate calming or coping tools and strategies such as recharging in classrooms).
- Have a common language in which to problem solve, to resolve problems on their own, and reflect on thoughts, feelings, and choices.
- Demonstrate an increased ability to solve problems, as students are able to see other perspectives and predict possible outcomes.
- Identify triggers for different emotions.
- Appropriately identify, report, and help solve bullying.
- Create and reflect on personal goals.
- Demonstrate leadership through volunteer opportunities (Student Leadership Council 3rd/4th and 5th , Play 60, lunch bunch and MAPEL peer support volunteers, Food Drives, After School Clubs, Leading Assemblies).
- Coach each other in times of difficulty or stress.

How are things different for adult staff?

- There is a stronger sense of community that extends across the building and touches all roles.
- We see ourselves as agents of the work. We are empowered to “be the magic” that can change outcomes for kids.
- Staff is more courageous and willing to be vulnerable--to ask for help, to lean on others.
- There is a strong sense of collective and self-efficacy that permeates the building.
- There is a common language for students and for adults.

How are things different for our families and community?

- Families are reinforcing skills at home. There is a shared common language.
- A family climate [survey](#) indicated a high level of satisfaction, for example:
 - 98.7% of families strongly or somewhat strongly agree that their student feels successful at school.
 - 96.3% of families strongly or somewhat strongly agree that their student feels safe at school.
- Families are learning more about the diverse needs of our students and other families.
- Families are experiencing an increased connection with school.
 - This summer we started “[Rock the Block](#)” where we staff visited most of our students’ homes before the school year started.
 - Families and community members are also participating as Watch D.O.G.S throughout the year.

Conclusion

We believe that we will substantially influence the academic achievement and personal growth of all students if we continue to implement an integrated program of social emotional learning in tandem with our work that strongly emphasizes high quality instruction.